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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the giver of blessings, thank You for Your many gifts. We praise You for the gift of strength for the present duties we must do and for the doors of opportunity You continue to open. We are grateful for the gift of courage to face the future unafraid and to trust You to direct our steps. Lord, we are thankful also for our lawmakers who strive to build a better Nation and world. Bless and keep them. Keep them from being blind to their own faults and from a critical spirit that looks for faults in others. Help them to see and count Your blessings until their lives overflow with ceaseless praise.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK L. PRYOR led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 26, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a

Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PRYOR thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

THE CHAPLAIN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, while the admiral, the Senate Chaplain, is on the floor, I wish to take a minute and acknowledge the prayers he offers here every morning. I have the good fortune to be here almost every day, and the thought and preparation he puts into his prayers is meaningful to most all the Senators; I don't know if there is an exception to that. Often, these prayers are directed, it seems, to me; I guess that is what prayers are all about.

I appreciate very much his leadership and the hard work he does not only with individual Senators but with our staffs. He has been a comfort to so many different individuals who work in this huge Capitol complex with their personal tragedies and difficulties. Most of those don't take place as the prayer does in the Capitol before millions of people. They are very private matters. We recognize that, and word comes back to me and others about all the good he does.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for an hour, and Senators will be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each during that period of time. The Republicans will control the first 30 minutes. The last

half hour will be controlled by the Democrats.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the national service legislation.

Cloture was filed last night on the underlying bill. As a result, there is a 1 p.m. filing deadline today for first-degree amendments.

Today will be a very confusing day on the floor. We have the Budget Committee meeting. There will be a series of votes starting at noon and then at 3:30 this afternoon. Those could take a considerable period of time. In addition, there is a White House meeting that I believe is a bipartisan meeting; is that right? Is the Senator going to the White House today?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I am not sure I am going to be able to go.

Mr. REID. But it is a bipartisan meeting.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yes.

Mr. REID. The President will brief the bipartisan group of Senators on what is going on in Afghanistan. It is a report that has been completed. I mention that because that takes place at 1 p.m. today. There will be a lot of difficulty in scheduling votes here today.

In addition, there is a 4 p.m. Senators-only briefing with Ambassador Richard Holbrooke to talk about Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are going to try our best to finish this bill, so everyone be patient. I have had extended conversations with Senator HATCH. It is very doubtful whether we will have to try to invoke cloture on this. I think people have had opportunities to offer amendments.

If there are other amendments to be offered today, I hope Senators will do it quickly so we can schedule the debate and votes on those. We have had a good week on this important, truly bipartisan piece of legislation, with heavy bipartisan support.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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